

**March 08, 2018: International Women's Day**

## **WOMEN IN THE VEDAS**



***By Acharya Bramdeo***

Women hold the most prominent place in society. After marriage, the *Garbhaadaana Samskaara* is the next sacrament where the couple prays and vows to put up all efforts to beget progeny that would grow to be human beings of the highest order in terms of character, actions and innate temperament. In fact the effort starts well before conception. The duties of the husband and all relatives encompass amongst others, the need to create a physical, mental, emotional and social environment conducive to the development of the would-be-mother and the to-be-born child.

***The Vedas, more fully expounded by seers / sages of yore (rishis), contain several edicts calling upon humanity to have due respect towards women folk ...hold them in high esteem as we do unto our mothers and sisters.*** The life story of Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati has at least one reference ...he bows in front of a girl child.

*Matrimaan pitrimaan aachaarymaan purusho vedah* (Shatpatha Braahmana) states: “He/she alone can become a great scholar who has had the advantage of three good teachers, viz., the mother, the father, and the preceptor. The family is blessed and the child is most fortunate when the parents are righteous and learned.”

***The mother has a healthy influence on her children which surpasses that of everyone else. No other person can equal a mother in her love for her children, or in her concern for their welfare.*** Matrimaan refers to the devout and learned mother who continuously strive to impart the universal Vedic (human/living) values, a truly spiritual tone to the mind of her child from the time of conception till his knowledge is perfected. It is no surprise that ‘modern concepts’ concur with the Vedic ideals that the mother’s lap is the best university for the development of the humane aspect of children.

The following terms referring to women folk in the Vedas speak volumes:

- ***Kanya***: Intelligent girl with brilliant character, actions and temperament.
- ***Duhita***: daughter who cultivates a radiant personality like the rising sun; educated, cultured, multi-skilled; apt to dispel the darkness of ignorance; has subdued/tamed ego (me, mine & myself), overpowered attachment and hate, and surmounted the fear of death; abides by the tenets of *dharma* (virtue); benevolent, compassionate.
- ***Maatarah***: a lady who not only gives birth to the child, but more importantly is responsible for moulding the personality of her children to be virtuous in thoughts, speech and actions at all

times; who instils her children to put up 100% physical and mental efforts towards realising the goals of human life (*dharma-artha-kaama-moksha*).

A successful mother or father is referred as such only when the child grows to be at least 10 steps ahead of his parents, **both** in terms of material and spiritual prosperity. Human life is nowadays more skewed towards leaving a huge material legacy but little in terms of living values. Why? ***It seems that mothers were formerly less literate, but more educated as regards to life skills - behaviour and way of doing things.***

Emphasis is currently only on literacy and numeracy skills, that is- the three R's (**R**eading, **wR**iting & **aR**ithmetic) with no time to inculcate the universal Vedic values through story telling as our elders did. Pushing the dirt under the doors of development and technology is the ideal blame game ...these lifeless tools do not switch on by themselves and do not pull us to them ...rather we switch them on and unconditionally surrender ourselves ....no quality time for the family but indefinite time for television, games, social networking, etc. ...little or no networking between our actions: thoughts, speech and physical actions.

Self-introspection is the one-and-only process which would empower us to be true to ourselves and thoughtfully gauge our success rate in the holistic development of our children, the would-be-mothers/fathers of forthcoming generations.

***Women's Day (Mahila Divas) is time for us to open our eyes ...to address contemporary problems at the root level ...to stop the face-lifting policy of pruning the branches and leaves or embellished wrapping.***

**Satyam Vada, Dharmam Chara:** Speak the truth, Lead a righteous life. The untold meaning (*akankasha*) is: "Be a role model, a real life example". That is the highest knowledge, the only invaluable/intangible heritage to our children!

***Respect for womenfolk should not be mere words or a one-off, one-day event. Awareness should be 24x7 basis (round the clock: 24 hours a day and 7 days a week). Role models walk-the-talk!***

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